

REMARKS

This amendment is offered in response to the Office Action of February 22, 2005.

The Office Action rejected Claims 1, 2, 5 and 10 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by the Yamada reference (U.S. Patent No. 5,725,100).

The Yamada reference discloses a semiconductor wafer case wherein a single wafer is engaged about its periphery by “presser feet” made of “bent leaf spring” (col. 1, line 16). The single semiconductor wafer is suspended by its edges. Moreover, it appears that this device would be very awkward for automated insertion and withdrawal of semiconductor wafers. Beyond the fact that a single semiconductor wafer is stored and transported, it appears that the semiconductor wafer is somehow manipulated by “tweezers” during “automatic engineering” (col. 2, lines 2 and 53-54). Perhaps, alternatively, the single semiconductor wafer could be inserted and withdrawn from the box in concert with the holders 3 and “presser feet”. In any event, it should be apparent that the semiconductor wafer would not be inserted prior to the insertion of the presser feet and that the presser feet would not be withdrawn with the semiconductor wafer remaining in the box.

This is quite different from newly amended Claims 1 and 11 which recite:

said spacer elements comprising a flexible material, whereby said spacer elements can be installed after a plurality of semiconductor wafers have been placed in said wafer containment area and further whereby said spacer elements can be removed prior to removal of the plurality of semiconductor wafers

This sequence is discussed in detail in the present application on page 2, lines 7-11 and page 10, lines 17 and 18.

It is therefore respectfully submitted that the claims are patentable over the Yamada reference.

The Office Action rejected Claims 1, 2 and 4-6 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by the Chen reference (U.S. Patent No. 5,611,448). Similarly, the Office Action rejected Claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 11, 12 and 15 as being anticipated by the '711 Lin reference (U.S. Patent No. 5,553,711). In the Chen reference, it appears that element 510 of wafer confinement member 50, cited as a spacer, does nothing more than restrain the movement of the wafers parallel to the cylindrical walls and does nothing to space the wafers away from the walls. This is quite similar to the "flaps 34" of the '711 Lin reference. Both references disclose a structure which is quite different from newly amended Claims 1 and 11 which recite "spacer elements which extend into said wafer containment area thereby positioning a plurality of semiconductor wafers away from said at least one cylindrical wall" (new language underlined).

It is therefore respectfully submitted that the rejections of the Chen and '771 Lin references are overcome.

The Office Action rejected Claim 3 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over the Yamada reference in view of the Connors reference (U.S. Patent No. 6,193,090). It is respectfully submitted that Claim 1, upon which Claim 3 depends, was distinguished over the Yamada reference hereinabove and that the Connors reference teaches nothing which, alone or in combination with the other cited prior art, would anticipate or make obvious the spacer configuration of the presently claimed invention. It is therefore respectfully submitted that Claim 3 is patentable over the cited prior art.

The Office Action rejected Claim 4 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over the Yamada reference in view of the '079 Lin reference. As discussed above, neither the Yamada

reference nor the '711 Lin reference (which discloses "flaps 34" very similar to those of the '079 Lin reference) disclose spacers which position "a plurality of semiconductor wafers away from said at least one cylindrical wall ... [and] can be installed after a plurality of semiconductor wafers have been placed in said wafer containment area and further ... can be removed prior to removal of the plurality of semiconductor wafers". As Claim 4 is dependent upon Claim 1, Claim 4 is likewise allowable over these cited references.

The Office Action rejected Claims 3 and 11-16 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over the Chen reference in view of the Lewis reference (U.S. Patent No. 6,341,695). The Lewis reference discloses a semiconductor wafer containment device which has no spacer elements engaged by slots. Therefore, the Lewis reference could not possibly remedy the deficiencies of the Chen reference with respect to Claim 1 (upon which Claim 3) is dependent or Claim 1.

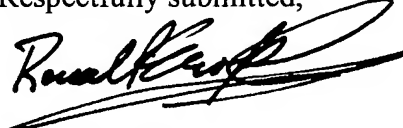
It is therefore respectfully submitted that all of the presently pending claims are patentable over the cited references.

This amendment re-writes Claims 7 and 17 in independent form. It is therefore respectfully submitted that Claims 7-9 and 17-20 are in immediate condition for allowance.

For all of the reasons above, it is respectfully submitted that all of the presently pending claims are in immediate condition for allowance. The Examiner is respectfully requested to

withdraw the rejections of the claims, to allow the claims, and to pass this application to early issue.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronald E. Brown", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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